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Residential vacancy surveys, 1928-39
Place:
[Washington, D.C.]
Date:
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real property section ... [Washington, D.C.,
1940]
24 p. incl. tables. 27cm.

At head of title: Department of commerce,
Harry L. Hopkins, secretary. Bureau of foreign
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James W. Young, Director

RESIDENTIAL VACANCY SURVEYS, 1928-39

by S. B. Barber

May 1940 | Construction and Real Property Section | Price 10 cents

INTRODUCTION

During a period of eighty years and more of notable urban growth in the United States, business men and governmental agencies have, until the most recent years, developed relatively little factual information on the current needs for residential construction and other real property improvements, on the general character of the building market, or on the economic conditions which influence building activity. The material which has been developed in these fields in the last few years, though highly useful, merely scratches the surface of the possibilities, and much of it has not been used by those who stand most to benefit from it.

Construction in the United States still proceeds, for the most part, on a trial and error basis, supplemented by the most meager and the most general information on current and prospective future relations between demand and supply. Builders and property owners still expand or curtail their activities largely by aiming in the dark. Builders finding their operations or those of their neighbors successful in a given year generally increase their operations in the following year. On the other hand, when rentals and sales prove slow, the tendency is, naturally, to curtail subsequent operations. Under such methods, the interval between the recognition of an unfilled need for new buildings and the completion of the necessary additions means a loss of potential profits to the builder. The interval between satiation of the demand and curtailment of new construction may frequently mean severe losses to the builder and a decline in the values of properties in the affected area.

By comparatively inexpensive methods it is possible to secure comprehensive factual information upon the conditions at any given time in the market for residential building. It is also possible to make some rough approximate guesses, several years in advance, as to the trends in the physical needs for new dwellings.

Information on residential vacancy has come to be recognized as of prime importance in this respect by those who initiate or finance residential construction and by those who are concerned with the larger problems of city planning and public housing. On a nation-wide scale, vacancy data may also be useful to point out trends in the demand for new construction and in the resulting demand for building materials, and also as a guide to the formation of public housing and home-financing policy.

Accurate and complete figures on residential vacancy (that is, on the number of family dwelling units vacant in a given area, expressed usually as a percentage of all existing dwellings in the area) form the most comprehensive single measure of conditions in the local market for residential real estate, if properly analyzed. Used by themselves, they constitute an inventory of excess housing facilities; secured in adequate detail and properly interpreted in the light of other available market data, they also show the location and the nature of the demand for housing. They help to show what new construction will be marketable and what will be unprofitable, facilitating the adjustment of supply to a demand otherwise difficult to measure.

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For example, through the medium of a vacancy survey, supplemented by other appropriate data, facts can be substituted for impressions and hearsay in determining whether the erection of a new apartment house with units of a certain size and monthly rental in a given section of the city is likely to be a profitable venture. Or builders and investors looking for a profitable medium for their services and funds may find revealed by the survey an unsuspected need for small, inexpensive houses in a suburban area, and may thus be diverted from a dangerous venture in high-priced homes in another suburb where the survey reveals a surplus which has not been generally known.

Nor are vacancy data useful only to determine the market for new construction. They can also show trends in the demand for old dwellings and can be useful in facilitating adjustments in rents and selling prices in accord with changing market conditions.

That surveys of vacancy and other aspects of the real property market are considered valuable by local organizations is shown, as will hereinafter be indicated, by the numerous surveys which these groups have conducted during the last ten to fifteen years. In most cities, however, adequate data are still largely nonexistent, and for many cities the material which has been collected is incomplete and is not available to all those who might take advantage of it. It is the purpose of this report, therefore, both to make existing vacancy data more widely available and to call attention to the need for further information and to the possibilities of securing improved data in the future.

It is hoped that the report may stimulate interest in the development of additional surveys of residential vacancy -- sponsored locally by interested organizations, singly or in cooperative groups. Ordinarily the Real Estate Board or the Chamber of Commerce would be the nucleus of such a group, supplying the necessary direction and a specialized knowledge of local conditions useful in securing and interpreting the vacancy data. Since real-estate markets, unlike those for most commodities, are almost entirely local in their extent, local initiative and direction of the surveys are peculiarly appropriate.

The Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, as one of a number of governmental agencies interested in the development of real-property market information, is engaging with these agencies in cooperative studies looking toward the preparation of a series of procedures, adapted to varying local conditions, which will assist local groups in making uniform surveys of vacancy. The Bureau will be able to aid these groups by making available such procedures as are developed, by rendering active assistance in securing the cooperation of other governmental agencies in making surveys, and, in appropriate cases, by assisting directly with the surveys. The Bureau is always available as a source of advice on technical problems arising in local surveys. Inquiries will be welcomed.

The Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce also acts as a clearing house for vacancy statistics which may be of value in indicating recent trends in the housing market. This report presents and analyzes detailed vacancy data secured in local surveys in a number of cities during the years 1936-39. It also contains a tabular summary of vacancy data for the period 1928-35. In this respect it supersedes "Urban Residential Vacancies, 1930-38", which appeared in the Survey of Current Business in August 1938.

The Bureau wishes to acknowledge its indebtedness to the many local Real Estate Boards and other organizations which have furnished the bulk of the vacancy data appearing herein. Without the cooperation which they have cheerfully furnished, and which has frequently involved considerable effort, this compilation would not have been possible. The assistance of the Federal Housing Administration, in supplying data from surveys made with its cooperation and data secured by its field representatives, has also been of great value.

Part I. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF RESIDENTIAL VACANCY SURVEYS

DEVELOPMENT OF VACANCY SURVEYS

Vacancy surveys originated as private undertakings. Such surveys were made long before the Federal Government entered the field with its Real Property Inventories, and they cover ground which the Census has not until this year attempted to include. Real-estate boards and private housing agencies initiated these surveys to fill their pressing needs for current information on the number and location of vacant homes in their cities. The same agencies have largely continued and developed these surveys until recently, when local governments and public housing authorities, frequently with the assistance of work-relief projects, have stepped in to assume a part of the burden.

The chief handicap from which the private surveys have suffered has been a lack of funds for undertaking complete and accurate enumerations. In most cases they have been forced to rely on untrained and unpaid volunteer enumerators, and ordinarily they have been unable to utilize the services of trained statisticians. Nevertheless, the sponsors of the surveys have produced a great mass of valuable data, as will be seen from the summary figures in the tables herein, most of which result from these independent local surveys.

Other handicaps have been the lack of any permanent clearing house for the experience and information gained in the surveys, and the lack of an agency to incorporate the local experience with the statistical techniques developed and the wide experience gained in the Federally assisted surveys. Such a coordination of these carefully prepared and tested statistical methods with the practical needs and limitations of private sponsoring organizations, if made available to the latter in convenient form, would be of value in extending and improving the vacancy data they secure.

Steps have already been taken by various Federal agencies to meet this need, as will be hereinafter indicated, and additional work in this direction is contemplated.

STANDARD METHODS OF SECURING VACANCY DATA

Most of the existing vacancy data have been derived from one or another of the various types of surveys described below. It is probable, moreover, that future data in this field will come largely from similar surveys or from their adaptations. A discussion of the varying accuracy of different types of surveys and of the comparability of their results is thus useful not only in comparing and evaluating the vacancy figures in the tables on subsequent pages, but also in planning new surveys and in improving the techniques of those already in existence.

A. Complete Surveys

Real Property Inventory: 1/ Comprehensive surveys of real property have been made in many cities during the past six years. Although the collection of vacancy information is but a

1/ Strictly speaking, the term "Real Property Inventory" designates the surveys made under the auspices of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce in 64 cities in 1934, and possibly a few other surveys made at about the same time. Similar surveys made subsequently have been called Real Property Surveys; but for the sake of simplicity, the term "Inventory" is here used to cover both groups.

small part of the field covered by these surveys, which are mainly concerned with making complete inventories of the physical characteristics of all existing dwelling units, the vacancy data obtained are the most complete which have been secured prior to the 1940 Census of Housing. The necessity of securing information on condition of structure, number of rooms, number of occupants, sanitary facilities, etc., for each individual dwelling unit, requires actual entrance into each home or interview with its occupants, owners, or agents; and it is thus virtually certain that practically all vacant units will be found and counted.

The inventories have thus far been made as relief projects financed from Federal funds. While the personnel must thus ordinarily be selected from a group with little experience in survey or statistical work, the availability of an ample quantity of labor has permitted a training period for enumerators and clerks and has facilitated a partial recheck of the results. In addition, it has been possible to achieve uniformity and promote accuracy by the requirement that the surveys be made in accordance with a standard manual of inventory procedure, which is designed to minimize all of the obvious opportunities for error or omission.

There are, however, major difficulties in the Inventory method. The expense, for instance, generally precludes the making of successive annual surveys on the same thorough scale. Comparable data are thus difficult to secure.2/ Because of the volume of data collected, tabulations of the results are often delayed past their period of greatest usefulness, for vacancies may change quickly.

It is also possible that the Inventories overstate the actual vacancy in usable residential units currently in the housing market. This can come about through including, in the number of vacancies, unoccupied units in abandoned structures which cannot be made habitable; through counting as vacant residential units suites which may be rented equally well as business or commercial units; through counting structures which are vacant but are currently held off the market; and through counting as separate units in "converted" structures units which may very well be combined into a lesser number of larger units when they are rented. The amount of such overstatement is not ascertainable and probably varies from city to city.

The deficiencies in the Inventories do not seriously detract from their great usefulness, except as they affect their value for comparison with current surveys. In the main, the Inventories remain the most comprehensive sources of vacancy data which have become available up to the time of the 1940 Census of Housing.

About two hundred Inventories were made throughout the country in the years 1934-36. Resurveys are now being made in a number of these cities, and initial Inventories are being made in additional cities. Data for these are not shown in the tables in this report because the Inventory vacancy figures are not comparable with data secured in other types of surveys and because in no case is more than one Inventory figure now available for any city. For the 64 cities covered in the Real Property Inventory of 1934, vacancy figures will be found in the Summary and individual-city reports on the Inventory, published by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. For the other 140 cities surveyed in 1934-36, summary vacancy data are given in "Urban Housing," a report published by the Works Progress Administration in 1938.3/ Data for surveys made since that time have not yet been published in a form convenient for reference.

2/ See discussion on pages 8, 9.

3/ A list of the available reports for sale by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce may be had on request from the Bureau. Requests for "Urban Housing", should be directed to the Work Projects Administration, Washington, D. C.

Housing Census of 1940: It should be noted here that comprehensive data on vacancy throughout the country have been collected as a part of the Census of Housing taken during April 1940 in connection with the regular Decennial Census of Population. When this material is tabulated and printed, there will be available for the first time complete and accurate data on vacancies for the entire country. The figures secured in the Census for all existing dwelling units, as well as for vacancy, can also be used as bases for the measurement of future changes in vacancy.

Work Projects Administration Vacancy Survey: The Work Projects Administration has taken some steps toward development of a procedure which provides for projects to make surveys of vacancy only. This would make possible the more frequent collection of vacancy data than the comprehensive Inventory procedure permits. The procedure contemplates, by means of a house-to-house canvass of all residential units in a city, a count of the total number of existing units of each structural type and of the number of vacant units of each type. Information on rental or sale price, number of rooms, and condition of structure also is to be obtained, but for the relatively small number of vacant units only.

In this survey the enumerators may judge from its external appearance whether a house is vacant, and need not enter or inquire; so the degree of accuracy and completeness may not be as great as in the Inventories. It is frequently difficult to ascertain, without entering and inquiring, the number of dwelling units and the number of vacant units in some types of multi-family dwelling structures. This difficulty is particularly serious in the case of large old single-family houses that have been converted into multi-family structures, but which still have only a single entrance. Despite this lack of completeness, surveys made in this manner can provide a great volume of useful data on vacant units. At the same time, they can be completed in a short period at an expense relatively moderate as compared with the Real Property Inventories, and may practicably be repeated at intervals as short as a year, to obtain a continuing series of figures on vacancy changes and trends.

No surveys of this type have yet been made, inasmuch as the manual of procedure has not been published. Organizations wishing to have such a survey made in their city should discuss the matter with the appropriate municipal department or the public housing authority which may legally sponsor the survey, as well as with local WPA officials. However, it is not anticipated that the Work Projects Administration will approve the making of any such surveys until some time after the 1940 Housing Census.

Post Office Survey: For many years prior to the development of the Inventories, private organizations wishing vacancy data had often been able to obtain the assistance of local postmasters in having the count made by the carriers on their daily rounds. The postal survey is still the most generally used method of securing vacancy counts, and most of the data shown in Table I of this report are based on post-office counts.

This method offers the advantage that surveys may be made quickly and at slight expense, since the sponsor need pay only for printing and for the small amount of labor necessary in tabulating the results. However, the carriers are not allowed to secure data on rental, sale price, condition or number of rooms in vacant units; only figures on vacancy by types of structure and by districts may be secured. In some cities, particularly where the number of multi-family units is large and the postmaster feels that the collection of data for such units would place an undue burden upon the carrier in proportion to his number of "stops," the count has been restricted to one-family and two-family houses. It is generally possible for the sponsor to supplement such incomplete figures with a telephone canvass of the known large apartment houses, but three-family to ten-family apartments are thus largely omitted, though they may in many instances be an important factor in the city's housing supply.

Even when postmen cover all types of dwellings, they may miss many vacant units. Their primary interest is in the delivery of mail to occupied units, and they cannot be expected to comb each structure on their routes for vacant units -- especially when, as in converted dwellings and other multi-family types, the number of units in the structure may be greater than the number of entrances or mail-delivery points. It is believed, therefore, that although they may be fairly complete in the one-family, row-house, and two-family classifications, postal surveys may considerably understate the level of vacancy in multi-family structures. The understatement is probably greater in the converted dwellings and the smaller multi-family structures than in the large apartments, where the number of vacancies is ordinarily ascertained from the janitor or resident manager. What the amount of understatement may be is difficult to say; it probably varies from city to city.

Survey by Volunteer Canvassers: In some cities the surveys are regularly made by enumerators from the ranks of the sponsoring organizations, in most cases the real estate boards. Some of these surveys are well made, but the variation among them is considerable. Perhaps the chief difficulty in this type of survey is the understandable reluctance of the volunteer workers to devote to the making of a house-to-house canvass of the city the time which is required. Busy realtors cannot leave their offices and risk their livelihood long enough to do well a task which might take an equal number of full-time paid enumerators one or two weeks to accomplish. It is only natural to suppose, and the figures frequently support the supposition, that in some cities these canvasses are made from cruising automobiles, the count representing the number of houses having "For Sale" or "For Rent" signs, plus those obviously unoccupied. In other cases there may be no attempt to make a canvass, and the report may be merely a count of vacancies listed with realtors. Obviously, surveys made in these ways can give no accurate data on the available supply of unoccupied dwelling units of all types in the city.

Although it is realized that a lack of funds may prevent the hiring of enumerators to make a fully accurate survey, it is believed that by a small additional expenditure of time and effort these volunteer enumerations could be greatly improved. This can be done in part by requiring closer inspection of all structures in which the number of dwelling units might conceivably be greater than the number of entrances, or in which there might be vacant units not immediately observable. Improvement can also be brought about by supplying enumerators with carefully prepared maps, routes, schedules, and instructions, as well as by checking the results against data from previous Real Property Inventories, where they exist, showing the actual number of dwellings and dwelling units in each block.

The Federal Housing Administration has prepared, for the use of sponsoring organizations relying on volunteer or paid special enumerators, a manual of procedure, entitled "Local Residential Occupancy Surveys," which may be useful to such groups.4/ Inasmuch as the procedure outlined in this manual is rather complicated and perhaps not suited to the needs of all local organizations, efforts are being made by the cooperating Federal agencies, as indicated on page 2, to develop a series of simpler survey procedures.

4/ Copies may be obtained on request from the Federal Housing Administration, Washington, D. C. For a general outline of the type of procedure contemplated, see the description of the Works Projects Administration Vacancy Survey on page 5. The latter is based on the FHA technique.

B. Sample Surveys

Attempts are frequently made to estimate vacancy in a city by gathering data on vacancies in a selected group of homes. Sampling, properly carried out, may produce accurate results, with great saving in time and effort, but it should not be relied on unless the sampling method used is statistically sound. A proper sample, in order to have a mathematically good chance of accuracy, must be so chosen as to be likely to reach approximately equal proportions of the total dwelling units of each structural type, condition, rental range, and occupancy status (owner-occupied, tenant-occupied, or vacant) in each section of the city. The most common pitfall in making sample surveys is to ascertain vacancy only in premises listed with or managed by real-estate agents, or in apartment houses whose owners are members of certain associations. These surveys obviously ignore the great mass of owner-occupied and owner-managed one-family and two-family houses; and in the multi-family group they tend to weight more heavily the large modern apartments and the smaller properties which have high turn-over. They may be perfect measures of vacancy in the groups surveyed, but there is no ground for assuming that they represent vacancy in the entire city.

POTENTIAL NEW SOURCES OF VACANCY DATA

Under this heading are listed local sources which may already have available data useful as measures of residential vacancy or changes in vacancy. Local organizations interested in securing vacancy figures might inquire of these local sources to ascertain whether such material has been secured by the agency concerned for its own use, or whether it could be secured in the future.

Some of these sources (the public utilities and the municipal departments) may perhaps be willing to cooperate in making more detailed surveys of vacancy than their own needs require them to make, if requested to do so by interested local organizations. The Federal agencies which are cooperatively studying the development of uniform vacancy-survey procedures are considering the possibility of making use of these sources as well as the types of survey more generally employed.

Water, Gas, and Electric Utilities: Some water companies and municipal water departments make annual inspections of all premises having installed plumbing, and sometimes of premises without water, as well. These companies frequently have data on the number of vacancies in the city extending back for several years, and in any event can easily collect such data in the future. Even when such an inspection is made over a period of several months, the data will ordinarily be useful. Usually, however, there is no break-down of vacancy by type of residential structure.

Most electric and gas utilities send meter readers on monthly inspections of the premises served. It may be possible that such companies would, as a public service, allow these inspectors to make vacancy surveys to the extent of reporting the number of vacancies in each type of structure, and possibly to the extent of securing data on the condition of the relatively small number of vacant dwellings. Alternatively, they might furnish addresses of vacant dwellings, enabling the sponsor of the survey to secure from owners or agents additional information on number of rooms and rental.

In cities where any considerable proportion of the dwelling units is not served by the cooperating utility, however, or where many multi-family structures have central meters, this type of survey may not be desirable and its results might prove inaccurate.

Tax Assessment Surveys: In some Massachusetts cities, and perhaps elsewhere, police departments make annual surveys of residential premises for the purpose of assessing poll taxes. It should be a relatively simple matter to have the police also jot down data on vacancies. In other cities it may be the practice of the city assessor to make annual surveys of real property, in the course of which vacancy data may be collected.

Data on Inactive Electric Meters: Currently available in the offices of many local electric power companies are monthly figures on the total number of electric meters installed on premises in the city and its suburbs, and the number of these which are inactive (i.e., installed, but disconnected). The percentage ratio of inactive to total installed meters has been found in some cities to approximate the percentage of residential vacancy as determined in the usual types of survey. The figures may in such cases be used as a guide to short-term trends in vacancy between the relatively infrequent complete surveys. The meter data are generally not available separately for sections of a city or for the various types of dwellings.

A detailed study of inactive-electric-meter data for a number of cities is now being made by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

EVALUATION OF DIFFERENT SURVEY METHODS

So far as is known, no existing survey method affords an exact measure of the number of usable vacant dwelling units in a city. There is wide variation between methods as to their accuracy and completeness. Comparisons may be made between the results of Real Property Inventories and the results of other surveys made in the same cities at approximately the same times, to show the extent of this variation. Illustrations are given in the following table:

City	REAL PROPERTY INVENTORY		OTHER VACANCY SURVEY	
	Date	Vacancy	Date	Vacancy
Asheville, N.C.	February 1934	11.3%	January 1934	6.4%
Columbus, Ohio	May 1936	3.8	May 1936	1.7
Des Moines, Iowa	February 1934	5.3	January 1934	4.4
Indianapolis, Ind.*	February 1934	9.2	March 1934	7.8
Lansing, Mich.	February 1934	4.1	February 1934	3.2
Oklahoma City, Okla.	February 1934	3.8	March 1934	3.0
Omaha, Nebr.	March 1936	3.4	April 1936	1.5
San Diego, Calif.	February 1934	9.1	February 1934	7.8

* Excluding apartments.

Comparisons between surveys made several months apart in other cities, while less significant, point to the same conclusion: that post-office, real-estate board and other private surveys in most cases reach only a portion of the vacant units revealed in a city by a contemporaneous Real Property Inventory. As the table above shows, differences in vacancy ratios between Inventories and other surveys made at the same time ranged from less than 1 percent to over 4 percent. The number of vacant dwellings reported in the private surveys was from one-half to five-sixths of the number reported in the contemporaneous Inventories.

This variation appears to bear no fixed relation to the type of survey, the types of dwellings found in the city, or the level of vacancy in the city. It is not certain that Real Property Inventories give exact vacancy figures, but it is reasonably certain that most other surveys understate vacancy levels and that the amount of understatement is variable.

This is said not to criticize any survey method, but to emphasize these points: (1) that in evaluating the results of a survey, efforts should be made to secure the most complete information available concerning the methods used in making it, and that in using it as a guide to the amount of vacancy in a city, allowances should be made for the known defects of the method used; (2) comparisons between cities should take into account the differences in methods and in local conditions affecting the possibility of completeness in each city.

However, even surveys which are incomplete by reason of inherent difficulties in the methods used, if they are made by the identical method and with reasonable care in successive years in the same city, will reflect the general trends in vacancy from year to year with fair accuracy. It is of the utmost importance that comparable methods and a high degree of care to insure statistical accuracy be used year after year.

It is also of the utmost importance that the results be not taken too literally. In some instances local organizations, accustomed to the low vacancy levels of post-office surveys, dismissed the Real Property Inventory figures, though more complete, as ridiculously high. The two could well have dwelt side by side — the former to show trends, the latter to show as nearly as possible the complete factual situation.

PART II. TYPES OF USEFUL VACANCY DATA

The methods of obtaining vacancy data are numerous; the types of detailed data which can be obtained without too great expenditure of effort are also much more numerous than is generally realized. Too frequently no effort is made to do more than count all vacancies in the city; the possibility of collecting information about those vacancies is ignored. Granted that in some surveys made by postal carriers and certain other types of enumerators it may be possible to secure very little more than a simple count of vacancies, it is nevertheless feasible to increase greatly the amount of useful detail secured in many existing surveys.

In the Real Property Inventories and in the Work Projects Administration vacancy surveys, adherence to the standard manuals of procedure insures that detailed information about the vacant dwellings will be gathered on a uniform basis for each city. In the Federal Housing Administration's manual of suggested procedure for privately sponsored vacancy surveys, which has been previously mentioned, provision is made for the collection and tabulation of similar, though somewhat less detailed, figures. Future procedures which may be developed for the use of local organizations will also provide for some of the detail listed hereafter. It is not the function of this report to summarize the material in these procedures, but a brief outline of the types of detailed vacancy data which can be secured in private surveys may be useful here.

The simplest type of vacancy survey is of course a mere count of the total number of vacant dwelling units in the city. This is of little local usefulness, except in very small cities, unless the vacancy figures are collected for the various districts of the city separately. Slight extra effort will be required to tabulate the vacancy count by districts, if the districts are laid out in advance of the canvass.

The item of information next in importance to the number of vacancies in each district is the total number of existing dwelling units in each district and in the entire city. Without figures on the total standing supply of dwellings it is of course impossible to compute the percentage of vacancy. Comparisons between districts, between cities, and between successive surveys in the same city and district can properly be made only on the basis of percentage figures. A count of the total standing dwelling units can be made under practically every method of enumeration, and should be a minimum requirement of a vacancy survey. It is not necessary to make such a count at the time of every survey, however, if the districts remain unchanged between surveys, but only at intervals of from 2 to 5 years, depending on the rate of the city's growth. For the next few years, the 1940 Census of Housing will provide the necessary basic count. Interim changes in the total number of homes can be calculated with sufficient accuracy from official data on new building permits, demolitions, and permits for conversions, usually available by location within the city.

Figures on the percentage of vacant dwelling units to total units for the city and its districts, if obtained regularly once or twice each year, preferably for the same dates in successive years, and if supplemented by data on the number of units under construction at the time of each survey, will show accurately the general relation between supply and demand in the market for housing in the city and its districts. These figures will not, however, fully indicate the nature of the demand. For such purposes other types of detailed data may be gathered. These other types are outlined on the following pages.

Details by Type of Structure: It is generally not enough to know that vacancy in a given district is high unless it is also known in what type of structure the vacancy is high. A large number of unoccupied apartments may point to the desirability of deferring further apartment construction. Low vacancy in single homes in a certain district may indicate an unsuspected demand not fully realized by builders. A break-down of vacancy by types of structure for each district is therefore desirable in most cities, although the number and the nature of the structural-type classifications used may vary according to the importance of the prevailing structural types in the city and the limitations imposed by the survey method used. Information is also needed, from the Housing Census or the local survey, on total existing dwelling units, counted by structural types — and by districts if possible — to permit the calculation of percentages.

The most common structural classification scheme employed in private vacancy surveys is: "one-family"; "two-family"; and "multi-family" or "apartments" or "apartments and flats". This scheme has the disadvantage that the multi-family classification includes structures of highly diverse types, from the three-family converted house to the large elevator apartment. It may be satisfactory for cities which have few multi-family dwellings, but it should usually be considered a minimum, rather than a desirable classification scheme. If the method of making the survey permits, it would be preferable to adopt a group of at least five or six classifications, distinguishing the structural types which are of major importance in the city's housing market. This number of types is obtained by subdividing the "multi-family" and possibly the "two-family" classification mentioned above.

Suggestive structural-type classification schemes will be found in the Federal Housing Administration manual and in the various Real Property Inventory reports which have been issued for the inventoried cities. Classifications based upon the categories which are finally used in the Housing Census of 1940 will also be useful, in that they will facilitate the use of the Census figures as a base for future surveys.

Details by Rental or Selling Price: It may be highly desirable to know in what rental groups vacancies predominate, or in what price classes the vacant residential properties which are for sale may be found, to ascertain the nature of the demand for new dwellings or the prospective future value or rental trends for old dwellings in various areas. If the vacancy survey provides data on vacancies in three or more price or rental groups, separately for each type of structure and in each district of the city, much guesswork in planning future residential development and in buying or selling investment properties may be avoided, and plans may be varied to suit the exact state of the market.

Details by Number of Rooms in Dwelling: Another valuable type of information on vacant dwelling units is the number of rooms in each vacant unit. The market for one-room apartments differs considerably from that for four-room apartments, the market for four-room houses from that for seven-room houses. There may be a shortage in one case and a surplus in another. This important information can be ascertained with a relatively small additional expenditure of effort, if rental and price data which require inquiry of the owner or agent of the property are already being collected in the survey.

Details by Age or Condition of Dwelling: For somewhat similar reasons it is desirable to ascertain whether vacancies are in new dwellings which have never been occupied, in modern or modernized structures, or in old structures and buildings not in good repair. These three general groups will ordinarily provide sufficient detail on age and condition, without actual inquiry into exact age and state of repair. Data on the number of dwelling units under construction should also be obtained.

In the case of the details by rental or price, by number of rooms, and by age or condition, it is not necessary to secure similar data for all occupied dwellings, since the computation of percentages is not essential.

Details by Type of Tenant: In those cities where any considerable portion of the population is of the Negro race and where it is the local practice to restrict occupancy by race, it will be desirable, if not necessary, to secure data on vacancy in dwellings for Negro occupancy separately, if the vacancy figures are to have full value. This also requires a count of the number of dwelling units of each type presently occupied by that race, in each section of the city.

Summary: It should be pointed out that excellent vacancy surveys can be made without going into the detail outlined in the preceding paragraphs. These details are presented only as suggestions, but in the belief that they may be regarded as goals to be approached as closely as conditions permit, in setting up new surveys or in improving old survey methods.

The full data here outlined, if collected and competently analyzed in any city, give an insight into the changing tastes and needs of the city's families and of their group movements within the city, as well as into the changes in the city's housing supply. Such an analysis may be necessary to explain a change in the city's vacancy ratio which does not readily appear from the simpler vacancy counts. An increase in vacancy may be the result of a movement from a blighted area to new homes in the suburbs, or merely of the recent completion of one or two large projects in one section of the city which have not yet been rented or sold. There may be no change in total vacancy in a city, and yet there may be a substantial movement from flats to single-family houses. There may be no change in one-family house vacancy, and still a shift from old houses to new, from high-rent to low-rent units, or from one section to another. These facts will be revealed only by a study of the results of two or more successive detailed surveys. They may be highly significant to persons interested either in new construction or in the real-estate sales and investment fields, as guides to prospective demand for units of certain types, sizes, and price classes, in particular neighborhoods.

The Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and the other governmental agencies interested in vacancy survey procedure may be able to furnish specific suggestions for classification schemes useful in making a detailed survey in a given city, to provide surveys uniform from city to city in certain basic essentials, but at the same time adapted to the particular local conditions and to the needs of the sponsoring organizations.

8487

PART III. PRESENTATION OF VACANCY SURVEY DATA, 1936-39

While a complete analysis of the real-estate market situation in any city requires, as has been indicated, a study of vacancies in various areas of the city and in various types and price ranges of dwellings, it is believed that summary data for cities throughout the country will be useful as indicators of general trends.

They may, for instance, throw light on prospective rent levels in the reporting cities, for vacancy exerts a considerable influence on rent. Furthermore, along with changes in the number of families, construction costs, taxes and other costs of ownership, rent levels, and family income available for housing, the level of vacancies in a given area is instrumental in determining the outlook for new residential construction. Even summary data on vacancy levels and trends may assist builders, home financers, and building material and equipment manufacturers and dealers to anticipate long-run changes in the potential demand for new homes and their component items. 5/

In Table 1 are shown summary vacancy data for over 80 cities, collected by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce as a part of its program of furnishing information on construction and urban real property.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

The vacancy figures in Table 1 include most of the complete surveys known to have been made, with the exception of publicly sponsored Real Property Inventories, during the period from January 1, 1936, to December 31, 1939. Most of these surveys were made under the auspices of local real-estate boards and chambers of commerce by means of house-to-house counts by postal carriers, members of the real-estate boards themselves, or employees of local utilities. The few instances in which the published figures are not based on complete house-to-house counts are indicated in the footnotes; the results in these cases are believed equally valuable.

In the table the figures are classified by the periods of the year in which the surveys were made. This has been done to fix the time of the survey and the length of the period between surveys more accurately than annual figures would allow, and not primarily to indicate the existence of possible seasonal fluctuations. However, the periods chosen, which are of 4 months' duration, indicate roughly the vacancy prior to shifts in occupancy during the spring months, vacancy during the late spring and summer, and vacancy after the fall renting season. In some cases seasonal trends may be noted.

The percentages in Table 1 have in some instances been changed from those reported by the survey sponsors, in an attempt to place them on a comparable basis. Unless otherwise noted, they may be assumed to represent, as percentages of the total number of dwelling units in a city, the number of units which are vacant and which have some economic value and serviceability or are capable of being made livable, but which are not clearly and hopelessly uninhabitable. Units merely undesirable or not currently rentable are generally included in the vacancies reported, as are vacant houses held off the market or held for sale rather than for rent. Units still under construction at the time of the survey are not usually counted as vacant or as part of the total standing supply.

5/ For a full discussion of vacancy and other social and economic factors affecting new residential construction, see Residential Building, by Lowell J. Chawner, a report prepared in the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce and released as National Resources Committee Housing Monograph No. 1. This report may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 10 cents a copy.

Generally the figures cover all standard types of nontransient residential units, including apartments and flats but excluding boarding houses, hotels, and apartment hotels. Exceptions to these general statements, where known to exist, are indicated in footnotes; but for many cities complete data on classification and coverage cannot be secured. For many cities, also, the survey may have included suburban areas outside the city limits, but this has not been specifically noted unless the suburban area included was relatively large.

Efforts have been made to place all figures for any one city on a comparable basis, that they may accurately reflect trends from period to period; and it is believed that in this respect the figures shown in the table are reliable, although there may occasionally have been minor variations in classification or coverage, or in the method of making the survey, which could not be ascertained. The data are not necessarily accurate, however, as measures of absolute levels of vacancy or for making exact comparisons between cities, as has been previously indicated.

The figures shown are nevertheless useful to show rough levels of vacancy, in addition to their considerable value in measuring trends. Those wishing to know local conditions in greater detail will probably wish to consult the sponsors of the surveys for complete data on the methods used and for detailed information on vacancy in particular sections of the city, in various types of buildings, and by rental or price groups. The source through which the data were secured is indicated in the table. Further information as to these sources will be furnished by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce on request.

Some electric-meter data have been included in Tables 1 and 3 of this report. Those for the Cleveland Metropolitan District have been adjusted, by the local organization furnishing them, to the results of the annual vacancy surveys made there, and thus furnish an unusually good index of vacancy trends between surveys. The Pittsburgh meter data are unadjusted, but agreed closely with the results of sample surveys made in the metropolitan area in 1934 and 1936. While the only recent check is a rather incomplete sample survey, the meter figures are still believed to represent vacancy trends with fair accuracy.

Electric-meter data available for some other cities have not been included, pending completion of the comprehensive study of inactive-electric-meter figures now being made by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

SUMMARY OF RECENT VACANCY TRENDS

Irregular upward and downward movements, with possibly a slight upward tendency predominating, mark the residential-vacancy picture for the last two years in those cities which regularly survey and report vacancies. The steady and rapid falling off of vacancy from the high levels of 1932-33, a nation-wide trend which continued well into 1936, has definitely come to an end in most cities and has given way to a diversity of trends reflecting varied local situations.

A number of factors enter into the fluctuations in residential vacancy, and no one of them alone accounts for the various trends reported by different cities. New construction, demolition of buildings, doubling and undoubling of families, migration to and from a city, and deaths, marriages, and divorces, all exert effects by no means unimportant. A recent vacancy decrease in one city may reflect an improved level of business activity and family income, resulting in migration to the city and an undoubling of families within the city. A trend toward higher vacancy in another city may reflect primarily a large volume of new residential construction. In still another city undoubling and new construction may offset each other, with no change in vacancy.....

In many cities, such as Detroit, Oklahoma City, and Denver, the ratio of unoccupied to total dwellings had by 1937 and early 1938 fallen so far from the high levels of earlier years that a pronounced revival in residential construction was a natural consequence. As a result of the construction, vacancy rose to levels permitting a greater margin for turnover, remodeling activity, and tenant choice. In other cities where vacancy had not fallen so low, such as Cleveland, Springfield, the Oranges, and Oakland, enough new building has nevertheless taken place, either in the cities or in nearby areas, to outstrip the immediate new demand, and provide a more nearly adequate supply for the choice of consumers of housing, with a corresponding increase in vacancy.

In some localities of course, depressed local conditions have contributed to cause higher vacancy. The full effect of the general business recession of late 1937, where it has been reflected in the vacancy figures, seems to have been felt in the housing market in the early and middle months of 1938. In St. Louis, for example, an increased vacancy was reported for those months, but occupancy returned to its former levels in the fall. Similar trends are noticeable in South Bend, Indianapolis, and Lansing.

A few cities, however, have throughout the past two or three years experienced a relatively stable and in some cases a continuously declining level of residential vacancy, apparently affected little by changes in business conditions or by increased building activity. Among these are Brockton, Utica, Des Moines, Duluth, Kansas City, Mo., Tampa, San Antonio, and Seattle.

VACANCY BY TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Table 2 presents data on trends in vacancy by type of structure, for selected cities which regularly report these detailed figures. The qualifications made with regard to the data in Table 1 apply with equal force here. Here, too, the data are probably good indicators of trends, but because of differences between cities in the prevailing structural types and in the designations of these types, as well as because of the previously mentioned differences in method and thoroughness of the surveys, inter-city comparisons are relatively inexact. For instance, one-family houses in one city may be almost invariably detached houses, and row houses there may be classified as flats; in another city, row houses may predominate and be locally classified as one-family houses. Multi-family houses may be mainly modern elevator apartments, or largely three- and four-family flats, depending on the city.

Because of the classification difficulty, and also because the trends by types are so diverse, no summarization of the data in Table 2 will be attempted.6/ Many possible explanations of the trends will suggest themselves to readers familiar with the cities in question--and, indeed, no full explanation can be made without such local information, supplemented by a study of the detailed results of a survey.

It should be reemphasized here that residential vacancy, though of interest on a national scale as indicating certain broad general conditions, is essentially of local importance. It is highly desirable, therefore, that local real-estate, building, business, and other civic interests should cooperate to make joint surveys periodically and thus secure comprehensive and timely data on which to base their business plans and the orderly growth and development of their cities. Wide cooperation may not only make it possible to complete detailed surveys and reports at minimum expense, but may insure that maximum use will be made of the data secured.

6/ See "Trends in Residential Vacancies - 1939", in the April 1940 issue of the Federal Home Loan Bank Review, for an analysis of vacancy by type of structure, based upon the data shown here.

TABLE 1 - RESIDENTIAL VACANCY, 1936-39

NOTE: The figures shown in this table and succeeding tables, though useful as measures of vacancy trends, have certain limitations as accurate measures of vacancy levels. See pp 8, 9

CITY	Source of Data	Percentage of Vacant Dwelling Units to All Dwelling Units											
		1936			1937			1938			1939		
		I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
NEW ENGLAND													
Boston, Mass.	HA	----	----	----	6.1	----	----	6.2	----	----	8.1	----	----
Brockton, Mass.	CWD	----	----	6.4	----	----	5.8	----	----	4.9	----	----	4.2
Fall River, Mass.	HA	6.4	----	----	4.9	----	----	4.1	----	----	2.7	----	----
Holyoke, Mass.	HA	8.2	----	----	6.3	----	----	6.5	----	----	----	----	----
New Bedford, Mass.	HA	5.8	----	----	4.1	----	----	3.3	----	----	3.6	----	----
Springfield, Mass.	REB	----	----	2.7	----	----	2.4	----	----	2.8	----	----	2.4
Worcester, Mass.	REB	----	2.6	----	----	----	----	2.0	----	----	----	----	----
Pawtucket, R. I.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	3.6	----	----	3.4	----	----	----
New Britain, Conn.	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.1	----	----
MIDDLE ATLANTIC													
Buffalo, N. Y. 1/	1/	----	1.8	----	----	----	----	1.0	----	----	----	----	----
New York, N.Y. (Apts.) 2/	FHA	----	5.8	6.9	5.1	4.4	6.4	5.2	----	7.7	6.2	4.6	----
Scarsdale, N. Y. 3/	REB	3.2	----	----	----	----	----	5.1	----	5.3	----	----	----
Syracuse, N. Y.	HA	4.1	----	----	----	----	----	2.3	----	----	2.7	----	----
Utica, N. Y.	REB	----	2.7	----	----	2.0	----	----	1.9	----	----	1.8	----
White Plains, N. Y.	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.5	----	----	----	----	----
Camden, N. J. 4/	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.0	----	----	----
Elizabeth, N. J.	REB	----	----	----	2.4	----	----	2.7	----	----	2.1	----	----
Jersey City, N. J. 5/	FHA	----	8.0	----	----	7.2	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
Oranges & Maplewood, N. J.	REB	3.6	----	----	3.0	----	----	2.7	----	----	3.4	----	----
Trenton, N. J. 6/	REB	2.3	----	----	1.4	----	----	1.8	----	----	1.7	----	----
Westfield, N. J. 6/	REB	2.3	----	----	2.6	----	----	2.9	----	----	3.3	----	----
Allentown, Pa. 7/	REB	----	----	1.0	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	.9	----
E.Delaware County, Pa. 4/	REB	----	----	2.4	----	----	2.4	----	----	2.6	----	----	----
Erie, Pa.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.6	----
Pittsburgh, Pa. 8/	8/	3.5	3.0	2.2	2.2	2.3	1.7	1.8	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.2	1.8
Scranton, Pa.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.7	----	----
Williamsport, Pa.	REB	.9	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.6	----	2.0	----	----
EAST NORTH CENTRAL													
Akron, Ohio	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.3	----	----	----	----
Cleveland,O.,Met.Dist. 9/	9/	3.0	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.6	3.3	3.3	3.0	----	----	2.9
Cleveland,O., City only 9/	9/	----	----	1.8	----	----	2.4	----	----	2.9	----	----	2.9
Cleveland,O., Suburbs 9/	9/	----	----	2.9	----	----	3.2	----	----	3.3	----	----	2.7
Columbus, Ohio	REB	----	1.7	----	----	----	1.6	----	----	----	----	----	1.7
Lima, Ohio	FHA	----	----	----	----	1.2	----	----	1.6	----	----	1.6	----
Toledo, Ohio	REB	----	----	1.4	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
Anderson, Ind. 6/	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.0	----	----	----
Elkhart, Ind. 6/	REB	2.3	----	----	----	----	----	1.9	----	----	1.3	----	----
Evansville, Ind.	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.2	----	----	----	----
Indianapolis, Ind. 10/	REB	----	3.4	----	2.2	----	----	----	----	2.6	----	----	----
Indianapolis, Ind. 6/	WC	3.6	----	----	2.0	----	----	2.5	----	----	1.8	----	----

For notes to this table, see second page following.

TABLE 1 - RESIDENTIAL VACANCY, 1936-39 (Continued)

CITY	Source of Data	Percentage of Vacant Dwelling Units to All Dwelling Units											
		1936			1937			1938			1939		
		I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
EAST NORTH CENTRAL													
Muncie, Ind. 11/	REB	1.3	----	----	.8	----	----	1.2	----	----	1.8	----	----
South Bend, Ind.	REB	1.8	----	----	1.6	----	----	2.8	----	----	2.5	----	----
Chicago, Ill. 12/	FHA	5.0	----	----	3.2	----	----	2.1	----	----	----	----	----
Elgin, Ill.	FHA	----	1.4	----	----	----	1.0	----	----	----	----	----	----
Peoria, Ill.	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.5	----	----	----
Rockford, Ill.	REB	1.3	----	----	.9	----	----	1.4	----	----	----	1.8	----
Ann Arbor, Mich. 13/	REB	.7	----	----	.5	----	----	1.0	----	----	----	----	----
Detroit, Mich.	HA	1.0	----	----	----	----	----	1.3	----	----	2.0	----	----
Grand Rapids, Mich.	FHA	----	5.0	----	----	3.8	----	----	4.8	----	----	----	----
Lansing, Mich.	REB	----	----	----	.9	----	----	2.0	----	----	1.2	----	----
Madison, Wis.	REB	----	.9	----	.9	1.5	----	----	1.6	1.4	----	1.3	----
Racine, Wis.	REB	----	1.3	----	----	----	.7	----	1.7	----	----	2.1	----
WEST NORTH CENTRAL													
Duluth, Minn.	*	----	----	----	2.6	----	----	1.4	----	----	1.5	----	----
Minneapolis, Minn.	*	----	----	----	1.5	----	----	1.5	----	----	----	1.9	----
St. Paul, Minn.	REB	----	1.5	----	----	1.2	----	----	1.3	----	----	1.8	----
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	REB	1.7	----	----	1.4	----	----	1.1	----	----	1.0	----	----
Davenport, Iowa	REB	----	.8	----	----	.7	----	.9	----	----	----	.9	----
Des Moines, Iowa	REB	1.7	----	----	1.8	----	----	1.9	----	----	1.5	----	----
Sioux City, Iowa 14/	CC	----	----	----	1.8	----	----	2.1	----	----	----	----	----
Kansas City, Mo.	REB	7.2	----	----	6.6	----	----	6.7	----	----	6.6	----	----
St. Louis, Mo. 15/	15/	4.3	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.8	4.6	4.5	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.5
Omaha, Nebraska 16/	REB	1.3	----	1.5	1.3	----	1.9	1.9	----	1.5	1.6	----	1.5
Wichita, Kansas	REB	----	----	----	3.5	----	----	----	----	3.4	----	----	----
SOUTH ATLANTIC													
Annapolis, Md.	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	5.4	----	----	----	----	----
Baltimore, Md.	REB	----	----	3.5	----	----	----	----	2.5	----	----	----	----
Washington, D. C. 17/	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.2	----
Asheville, N. C. 18/ 4/	REB	(3.7 2.6	2.4 2.1	----	(2.6 2.0	1.5	(1.9 2.4	2.8	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.0	----
Charlotte, N. C.	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.8	----	----	----
Wilmington, N. C. 12/	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	5.9	----	----	----	----
Atlanta, Ga. 12/	REB	----	----	----	----	----	4.8	----	----	----	----	----	----
Tampa, Fla.	REB	----	----	----	----	----	4.4	----	----	3.4	----	----	2.4
SOUTH CENTRAL													
Louisville, Ky.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.5	----	----	----
Nashville, Tenn.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.2	----	----	----
New Orleans, La. 6/	HA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.0	----	----	----	----
Oklahoma City, Okla. 13/	REB	1.5	----	----	1.6	----	----	4.1	----	----	4.7	----	----
Tulsa, Okla.	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	4.3	----	----
Dallas, Texas 6/	*	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.6	----	----	----	----	----
Houston, Texas	FHA	----	----	1.1	----	----	1.1	----	1.1	----	----	2.7	----
San Antonio, Texas 19/	REB	3.0	----	----	3.3	----	----	3.3	----	----	3.1	----	----
Wichita Falls, Texas	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1.9	----

For notes to this table, see next page.

TABLE 1 - RESIDENTIAL VACANCY, 1936-39 (Continued)

CITY	Source of Data	Percentage of Vacant Dwelling Units to All Dwelling Units											
		1936			1937			1938			1939		
		I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
MOUNTAIN & PACIFIC													
Casper, Wyo.	FHA	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	7.0	----
Denver, Colo.	UD	----	----	1.0	----	----	1.2	----	----	2.0	----	----	2.0
Salt Lake City, Utah	REB	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	3.0	----	----
Seattle, Wash.	REB	2.1	----	----	1.7	----	----	1.5	----	----	1.4	----	----
Spokane, Wash. 4/	FHA	----	2.4	2.2	----	1.8	2.1	----	1.8	1.8	1.9	----	2.0
Portland, Ore. 4/ 20/	REB	----	----	----	2.1	----	----	----	----	----	----	2.7	----
Oakland-Eastbay Area 21/	21/	4.6	----	----	2.6	----	2.2	----	3.1	----	----	----	----
Oakland, City only	21/	5.2	----	----	3.0	----	2.4	----	3.7	----	----	----	----
Other Eastbay Cities	21/	3.5	----	----	2.1	----	1.8	----	2.2	----	----	----	----
Pasadena, Calif. 4/ 22/	*	1.7	----	----	1.6	----	----	1.6	----	----	2.2	----	----
San Diego, Calif. 23/	REB	2.4	----	----	2.1	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

NOTES TO TABLE 1

Time of Survey: Period I in each year is from January 1 to April 30; period II from May 1 to August 31; period III from September 1 to December 31. Each survey is allocated to a period corresponding to the date of enumeration.

Key to "Source of Data" column:

*	Private source	HA	Housing Authority
CC	Chamber of Commerce	REB	Local Real Estate Board
CWD	City Water Department	UD	Bureau of Business Research, Univ. of Denver
FHA	Federal Housing Administration	WC	Water Company

Footnotes:

1/ One- and two-family dwellings only. 1936 figure is based on sample canvass by U. S. Public Health Service (vacancy in all types of dwellings was 3.2 percent); 1938 figure was furnished by Real Estate Board.

2/ Sample survey of large elevator apartment buildings in Manhattan.

3/ One-family houses only; includes parts of surrounding towns.

4/ One-family houses only.

5/ Percentage of inactive installed gas meters to total meters in use; these percentages were slightly higher than residential vacancy reported in the Real Property Survey made in 1934 and a sample survey by the State Housing Authority in 1937.

6/ Excluding apartments.

7/ One-family houses only. Vacancy in all types of dwellings in II 1939 was 1.2 percent.

8/ Data are for inactive electric meters for the months of February, June and October of each year, covering most of Allegheny and Beaver Counties. The data are published by the Bureau of Business Research of the University of Pittsburgh, and agree closely with vacancy in samples surveyed in February 1934 and June 1936.

NOTES TO TABLE 1 (Continued)

9/ Data for period III are from surveys made as WPA projects each October, and are made available by the Real Property Inventory of Metropolitan Cleveland, Inc., a non-profit research agency; figures for periods I and II are based on trends in inactive electric meters in the metropolitan area, adjusted to the annual surveys, and are for the months of February and June. Data for February to June 1939 are not yet available.

10/ Including apartments.

11/ One-family houses only; includes dwellings under construction, but excludes those "unfit for use".

12/ Sample survey.

13/ New houses which have not yet been occupied are not counted as vacant.

14/ One-family houses only; vacancy in all types of dwellings in I 1938 was 3.1 percent.

15/ The figures are for February, June and October, and are taken from the monthly sample surveys of Real Estate Analysts, Inc. They agree with the results of a complete survey of the metropolitan area for May 1938.

16/ The Omaha surveys cover one-family houses and some duplexes and flats over stores only. Separate figures are available on vacancies in large apartment houses, but these are not included here.

17/ Including Alexandria and Arlington County, Va., Silver Spring and Hyattsville, Md.

18/ Where two figures are given for a period, the upper is for the earlier survey within the period; the surveys were made at irregular intervals.

19/ Houses under construction are counted as vacant.

20/ Vacancy in all types of dwellings in I 1937 was 2.5 percent.

21/ The area includes Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Piedmont and San Leandro. Surveys are made under the sponsorship of the Oakland Real Estate Board.

22/ Includes Altadena, San Marino and surrounding areas.

23/ Includes suburban areas.

TABLE 2. - RESIDENTIAL VACANCY BY TYPE OF STRUCTURE IN SELECTED CITIES, 1936-39.

City and Period of Survey	Percent of Vacant to Total Dwelling Units		
	One-Family	Two-Family	Multi-Family
Cleveland, City *			
III 1936	1.0	1.3	3.4
III 1937	1.4	1.4	4.1
III 1938	1.4	2.0	4.8
III 1939	1.2	1.8	5.2
Cleveland, Suburbs *			
III 1936	3.5	1.5	2.4
III 1937	3.8	1.6	2.8
III 1938	2.9	2.8	5.3
III 1939	2.5	2.4	4.1
Denver, Colo. *			
III 1936	.9	1.0	1.1
III 1937	1.1	1.0	1.8
III 1938	1.4	2.0	4.3
III 1939	1.3	1.9	4.7
Des Moines, Iowa *			
I 1936	1.3	4.1	4.3
I 1937	1.6	4.0	2.6
I 1938	1.6	5.5	3.2
I 1939	1.1	5.5	3.3
Indianapolis, Ind.			
II 1936	2.8		7.8
I 1937	1.9		4.1
III 1938	1.9		6.9
Kansas City, Mo.			
I 1936	5.5	10.3	9.4
I 1937	5.9	11.0	7.0
I 1938	5.7	9.3	7.7
I 1939	5.1	8.6	8.8
Minneapolis, Minn.			
I 1937	1.3	1.6	1.8
I 1938	1.0	1.4	2.6
II 1939	1.0	1.4	3.8
Oakland, Calif., City			
I 1936	2.9	9.9	
I 1937	1.6	5.7	
III 1937	1.3	4.8	
II 1938	1.5	7.9	
Other Eastbay Cities 1/			
I 1936	1.9	8.4	
I 1937	1.5	4.2	
III 1937	1.2	3.7	
II 1938	1.7	3.7	

City and Period of Survey	Percent of Vacant to Total Dwelling Units		
	One-Family	Two-Family	Multi-Family
Oklahoma City * 2/			
I 1936	.9	2.4	4.3
I 1937	.8	4.1	4.0
I 1938	2.1	8.1	9.9
I 1939	2.4	9.3	11.6
Oranges & Maplewood, N.J.*			
I 1936	2.4	3.4	6.1
I 1937	2.4	2.3	4.6
I 1938	2.4	1.5	4.2
I 1939	2.7	2.2	5.5
Racine, Wis.			
II 1936	.8	1.6	2.9
III 1937	.6	.7	1.8
II 1938	1.1	1.6	6.4
II 1939	1.1	2.4	6.7
St. Louis, Mo. * 3/			
I 1936	1.9	5.0	5.9
I 1937	1.9	4.5	4.6
I 1938	1.5	5.9	5.9
I 1939	.9	4.8	5.2
St. Paul, Minn.			
II 1936	.6	1.8	4.3
II 1937	.7	1.5	2.7
II 1938	.7	1.3	3.3
II 1939	.8	1.5	4.4
San Antonio, Tex. 4/			
I 1936	1.9	5.4	10.0
I 1937	2.3	5.5	9.6
I 1938	2.2	5.6	9.1
I 1939	2.1	4.7	7.8
South Bend, Ind.			
I 1936	1.5	2.4	4.8
I 1937	1.4	2.2	2.9
I 1938	2.2	5.3	7.5
I 1939	2.0	4.8	5.9
Syracuse, N. Y. *			
I 1936	2.6	3.5	7.2
I 1938	1.7	2.0	3.8
I 1939	2.0	2.5	4.1

Footnotes to this table are on next page.

NOTES TO TABLE 2

For information on period of survey and source of data, and for special qualifications on the figures for a city, see the appropriate columns, notes and footnotes for the city in Table 1. For many of the cities shown here the data for one or more structural types represent consolidations of figures for several distinct types of dwelling units separately reported; these cities are indicated by asterisks (*).

Numbered Footnotes:

1/ Berkeley, Alameda, Piedmont and San Leandro.
2/ New houses completed but not yet occupied are not counted as vacant. Dwellings for Negro occupancy are excluded.
3/ Figures are for February of each year, from monthly sample surveys; the multi-family figures are unweighted averages of separate percentages for three-family houses and heated apartments.
4/ Dwellings under construction are counted as vacant.

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REVISED AND SUPPLEMENTARY VACANCY DATA, 1928-35

Vacancy data for the years 1930-35, for many of the cities listed in Table 1, were published in Table 1 of the article "Urban Residential Vacancies, 1930-38", which appeared on page 16 of the August 1938 Survey of Current Business.

Since publication of that table, the figures for some of the cities have been revised to improve their comparability, some have been discarded, and some new data have been secured. Vacancy information has also been secured for additional cities. The Federal Housing Administration has been of especially great assistance in making such information available.

In Table 3, beginning on the next page, are collected vacancy data for all cities in which two or more reliable vacancy surveys are known to have been made during the years 1928-35. These figures, together with those in Table 1, supersede the data in the Survey article, and are believed to be as nearly complete a record of vacancy trends over the period of the last twelve years as it is possible to assemble.

Cities in which only one vacancy survey has been made are not included in the table. Real Property Inventory data, shown in the Survey article, are omitted here. With a few exceptions, as in the case of New York City, surveys of vacancy in "managed" properties only have been excluded, since it is felt that they are not comparable with the complete surveys of entire cities.

TABLE 3 - REVISED AND SUPPLEMENTARY VACANCY DATA, 1928-35

CITY	Period of Survey	Percent of Vacant to Total Dwelling Units							
		1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
NEW ENGLAND									
Brockton, Mass.	III	----	----	8.6	8.1	9.4	9.6	8.7	7.9
Fall River, Mass.	I	----	----	13.8	14.9	12.7	12.4	9.3	7.0
Holyoke, Mass.	I	----	----	----	----	12.9	12.8	11.3	10.0
New Bedford, Mass.	I	----	----	----	----	----	12.5	9.5	7.4
Springfield, Mass.	III	5.9	4.9	4.5	4.4	6.1	6.5	5.7	4.2
Worcester, Mass.	II	----	5.0	5.1	----	----	----	----	----
Pawtucket, R. I.	II	----	----	----	5.5	5.7	----	----	----
MIDDLE ATLANTIC									
New York, N. Y., Manhattan 1/	I	7.4	8.9	----	----	15.0	17.8	----	----
" " " " Brooklyn 1/	I	6.4	7.5	----	----	8.6	11.8	----	----
" " " " Bronx 1/	I	5.5	5.9	----	----	9.9	12.1	----	----
Rochester, N. Y.	#	----	----	----	6.2	6.3	7.7	----	----
Scarsdale, N. Y. 2/	I	----	----	7.7	----	7.0	4.3	3.1	2.8
Syracuse, N. Y.	#	----	----	5.2	4.8	5.9	5.3	----	----
Utica, N. Y.	II	3.6	2.8	3.5	4.5	5.6	4.9	4.1	3.1
White Plains, N. Y.	I	----	----	6.2	6.7	7.1	8.3	----	2.8
Camden, N. J.	#	----	----	5.1	----	8.3	----	----	----
Jersey City, N. J. 3/	II	7.8	8.5	8.8	10.7	11.6	16.3	14.4	11.7
Oranges & Maplewood, N. J.	I	----	----	5.3	----	5.8	7.4	6.5	4.3
Trenton, N. J. 4/	I	5.7	4.7	5.4	5.1	----	----	----	----
Westfield, N. J. 4/	I	3.5	5.3	3.7	2.9	2.2	3.7	2.5	2.4
Allentown, Pa. 4/	#	----	3.1	----	----	3.5	1.7	.7	.9
E. Delaware County, Pa. 2/	III	----	----	----	----	6.1	6.5	5.1	3.8
Pittsburgh, Pa. 5/	II	----	----	----	----	8.0	9.4	6.3	4.2
Williamsport, Pa.	#	----	----	3.5	----	4.4	8.8	----	3.3
EAST NORTH CENTRAL									
Akron, Ohio	#	----	----	5.4	8.1	7.9	6.6	2.3	1.8
Canton, Ohio	#	4.5	2.9	4.2	----	----	----	----	----
Cleveland, O., Met. District 6/	III	4.0	2.6	4.1	5.6	9.0	7.4	4.7	3.1
" " City only	III	----	----	----	----	9.4	7.7	5.0	3.0
" " Suburbs	III	----	----	----	----	8.1	6.7	3.8	3.3
Columbus, Ohio	#	5.9	6.8	5.9	7.6	7.9	7.8	4.6	2.7
Dayton, Ohio	III	----	----	5.8	----	----	----	7.2	----
Massillon, Ohio	#	----	----	2.4	4.6	----	----	----	----
Toledo, Ohio	III	----	2.2	4.7	----	----	----	----	----
Elkhart, Ind. 4/	#	----	----	----	----	----	----	4.2	4.2
Fort Wayne, Ind.	#	----	----	----	2.8	5.2	6.1	2.2	----
Indianapolis, Ind. 7/	#	6.9	6.3	9.4	----	12.1	11.0	9.0	6.9
" " 4/	I	6.3	4.0	8.8	----	8.8	10.2	7.8	5.5
Mishawaka, Ind.	I	----	----	2.8	9.1	8.9	8.5	----	----
Muncie, Ind. 2/	I	----	----	1.3	4.0	7.4	8.6	5.5	3.1
South Bend, Ind.	I	----	----	3.0	6.5	6.0	7.4	4.9	2.5
Chicago, Ill. 8/	I	5.8	6.6	6.4	6.8	9.0	9.7	7.4	5.7
Rockford, Ill.	I	----	----	2.3	6.8	10.2	10.6	5.6	2.9

For notes to this table, see second page following.

TABLE 3 - REVISED AND SUPPLEMENTARY VACANCY DATA, 1928-35 (Continued)

CITY	Period of Survey	Percent of Vacant to Total Dwelling Units							
		1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
EAST NORTH CENTRAL (Continued)									
Ann Arbor, Mich. 9/	I	3.5	3.1	4.3	3.6	3.1	3.3	2.3	1.8
Detroit, Mich.	I	----	----	----	----	8.5	9.2	5.0	1.7
Grand Rapids, Mich.	II	5.1	4.9	7.2	9.8	10.6	11.2	8.2	6.7
Kalamazoo, Mich.	III	----	----	4.6	5.1	6.6	4.9	3.6	1.8
Lansing, Mich.	I	----	----	----	----	6.4	6.4	3.2	1.0
Madison, Wis.	#	----	----	(2.6 / 3.7)	3.4	(4.3 / 5.4)	----	1.7	1.0
Milwaukee, Wis.	#	----	----	3.4	4.0	6.0	----	----	----
Racine, Wis.	II	----	----	----	6.3	7.7	7.7	5.7	2.0
WEST NORTH CENTRAL									
Duluth, Minn.	I	----	----	----	6.2	7.8	----	9.2	4.0
St. Paul, Minn.	#	5.4	4.0	----	4.2	5.1	3.5	3.4	2.0
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	I	3.6	3.2	2.8	2.1	3.4	4.8	3.2	2.1
Davenport, Iowa	#	----	----	1.2	----	----	3.8	2.5	1.3
Des Moines, Iowa	I	----	5.4	5.2	4.1	4.5	5.1	4.4	2.2
Kansas City, Mo.	I	----	----	8.8	10.1	10.3	12.4	11.3	----
St. Louis, Mo. 10/	I	----	----	----	8.4	----	----	8.5	6.3
" " " 10/	III	----	----	----	----	11.0	10.0	5.6	4.3
Hutchinson, Kansas	#	----	----	----	3.3	4.5	----	4.8	----
Wichita, Kansas	#	----	----	----	----	8.9	7.2	3.1	----
Omaha, Nebraska 11/	I	4.8	3.1	2.9	2.3	2.6	3.9	2.5	1.5
" " 11/	III	4.0	3.3	3.2	2.7	4.4	4.0	2.0	1.5
SOUTH ATLANTIC									
Wilmington, Del.	#	----	----	1.5	----	7.3	----	----	----
Baltimore, Md.	#	----	----	4.4	----	----	----	4.9	----
Asheville, N. C. 12/	I	----	----	----	----	----	8.8	6.4	4.7
Tampa, Fla.	III	12.5	12.8	11.8	10.0	10.5	8.5	----	6.0
SOUTH CENTRAL									
Louisville, Ky.	#	2.4	----	7.9	9.3	8.5	----	----	----
Knoxville, Tenn.	#	----	----	4.5	----	----	8.8	----	----
Oklahoma City, Okla. 9/	I	----	----	1.5	4.1	8.5	9.7	2.9	1.5
Tulsa, Okla.	#	----	----	8.7	9.0	----	10.6	----	----
Beaumont, Texas	II	----	----	4.2	8.1	10.7	----	----	----
Dallas, Texas	I	4.2	5.3	3.3	4.4	----	----	----	----
Houston, Texas	#	----	----	5.0	5.9	----	----	1.4	1.5
San Antonio, Texas 13/	#	----	----	5.3	5.5	6.0	7.2	6.5	3.9
MOUNTAIN & PACIFIC									
Phoenix, Ariz.	#	----	----	5.1	----	----	9.0	----	----
Denver, Colo.	III	----	----	6.8	6.4	7.7	6.7	3.8	1.8
Pueblo, Colo.	III	----	----	6.8	8.9	9.6	----	----	----
Salt Lake City, Utah	III	----	----	3.4	5.8	7.0	5.5	2.8	1.6
Spokane, Wash. 2/ 14/	II	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.2	4.0	2.4
Portland, Ore.	#	----	6.2	----	8.2	8.9	----	----	----
Oakland-Eastbay Area, Cal. 15/	#	----	----	----	7.9	8.5	----	9.5	6.8
Pasadena, Calif. 2/ 16/	I	4.2	4.7	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.7	3.0	2.7
San Diego, Calif. 17/	I	----	----	----	----	7.4	8.3	8.0	4.8

For notes to this table, see next page.

NOTES TO TABLE 3

For Key to "Period of Survey" column, see note to Table 1.
# denotes that the period in which the survey was made varied from year to year.

1/ Vacancies in multi-family housing, from sample surveys made by the City Tenement House Department. Multi-family structures contain about 98 percent of all dwelling units in Manhattan, 60 percent in Brooklyn and over 80 percent in the Bronx.
2/ One-family houses only.
3/ Percentage of inactive to total installed gas meters; these percentages were slightly higher than vacancies as reported in a Real Property Survey in 1934 and a sample survey by the State Housing Authority in 1937.
4/ Excluding apartments.
5/ Data are for idle electric meters for June of each year, covering most of Allegheny and Beaver Counties. The meter ratios agree closely with vacancy in a sample surveyed in February 1934 and June 1936.
6/ Data for October 1932-35 are from complete surveys of the metropolitan district; figures for 1928-31 are estimates based on the percentage of inactive to total installed electric meters in the area.
7/ Including apartments.
8/ Sample survey.
9/ New houses not yet occupied, though completed, are not counted as vacant.
10/ Data for 1931-32 are from complete surveys of the city; data for 1933-35 are for February and October, from monthly sample surveys by Real Estate Analysts, Inc.
11/ The surveys cover one-family houses and some duplexes and flats over stores only.
12/ Several surveys were made in each year, 1933-35; the data here are for the first survey of each year.
13/ Houses under construction are counted as vacant.
14/ Data are also available for surveys made in the fall of each year.
15/ Includes Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, Piedmont and San Leandro.
16/ Includes also Altadena, San Marino, and surrounding areas.
17/ Includes suburban areas.

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